

~~UPDATED~~ and again! 17th August 2003

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The Autovon Exchange at Ipswich is located at grid ref : TM223443. And is currently abandoned, unused and vandalized, although much remains, including both of the Generators. The U.S. Army made a good job of removing most of the telecom's equipment. The vandals have since made a good job of removing all the cabling within the building.

AUTOVON was until the early 1990's the United States DOD Military Voice Communications System. Each Military Installation had it's own prefix for use in the AUTOVON system. Not all telephones on military installation's had the capability to call another military installation via AUTOVON. However, they could all receive an AUTOVON call coming from another installation.

A different 3-number prefix was used when dialing a military base using AUTOVON than the prefix used when dialing through the civilian phone system. Usually, AUTOVON was accessed by dialing 8 or 88 and waiting for a dial tone (on any phone connected to the AUTOVON system). A phone call made in this manner is limited to "ROUTINE" Priority. There are "ROUTINE", "IMMEDIATE", "FLASH", and "FLASH OVERRIDE" priorities, with ROUTINE being the lowest and FLASH OVERRIDE the highest To dial higher priority phone calls than routine, access to Technical control equipment was normally needed.



I have had some new information from Mike Hvozovic who was stationed at the site. Thanks Mike:

"The generator picture stimulated recall of the commercial power "Brown Outs" experienced in 1971-72. There were two 520KW diesel generators on-site operated and maintained by two outstanding MOD civilians supporting the station. To counter the "Brown Outs", we ran those generators alternately for 90 days without any mission or power failures."

"The "Exchange" actually was an US Defense Communications System (DCS) station operated and maintained by an US Air Force Communications Command (AFCC) Detachment of the parent AFCC Squadron supporting the RAF Bentwaters/Woodbridge complex and not the US Army. The station contained the AUTOVON switch, a technical control facility, three tropospheric forward scatter radio systems (those tall antenna towers), and two terrestrial microwave radio links."

"To the best of my recall, the station from inception in the 60's until deactivated was officially called RAF Martlesham Heath. Some of the building structure actually served the RAF Martlesham Heath of WW II fame located near but a little ways down from the station. Of course during the 70's, there were many local tales about the site's mission ranging from, believe it or not, an underground submarine base somehow connected to the North Sea to a radar station. Plain and simple, RAF Martlesham Heath was a critical communications network station linking US and NATO forces in the UK and European Continent with the US."

"A modular dormitory building for housing approx 12 enlisted bachelor personnel was built on or about 1973-1974. Apparently the dorm was removed upon deactivation of the station."



ETA Radio System Building

The Newer Red Brick building housed the radio system (Transmitters, receivers, multiplex etc) associated with the European Tropo Army System (ETA - Hook of Holland link) which was part of the US Defense Communications System in Europe and operated and maintained by US Army personnel. Two ETA stations, however, were operated by the US Air Force, one of which was RAF Martlesham Heath while the other was in Germany.

[Click on the Thumbnail for a larger view.](#)



More new information and pictures from Andy Saltmarsh, Andy says:

"I was in the USAF from 1976-1982 I was also stationed at Martlesham Heath from 1980 - 1982, Here are some photos that I found while cleaning out the basement. I had great time really enjoy my time at the Black Tile Pub and our trips into Ipswich. The local people were great to us and we use to have party out at the site in which our English friends would come out and join us. I actually got to go back to England for extend business trip in Newbury, around 1999, in which I took a trip up to Ipswich and Martlesham Heath. I stopped at the site and was amazed by the upgrade of the site and the demise of the site, since the last time I was there, it was pretty sad moment. A lot has changed in Martlesham Heath, from a small village to the large growth in housing and business, it took some doing but I found where we lived and the Black Tile Pub."

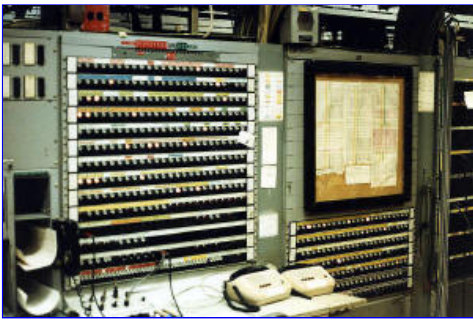
Thanks Andy



This shot from the roadway looking down the lane to the site. The building on the far right was the back up diesel generators. The building just to the left of the large white sign was the club where movies, parties, and games were held. The tall green building and smaller building around the green building, in the center of the photo, housed the radio, microwave, and avion equipment along with administration. The building on the right with the white horizontal stripe is the enlisted men's barracks. The chow is behind the barracks, which can't be seen from this photo.

Panorama shot of the site. To the far left you can see one of the football goals; our softball field was located there also.

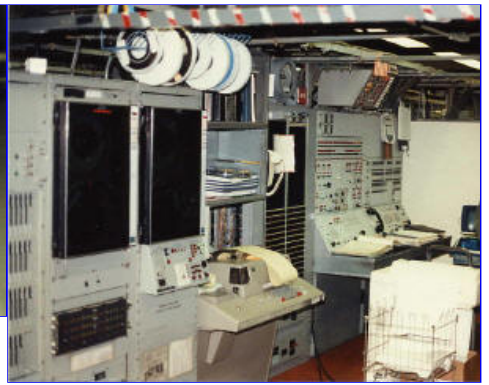
In side photo of central control, this is where it all happens, monitoring of all the equipment from this location.



One of the Autovon control panels



Battery Backup System on the right, the cabinets housed the AC to DC rectifiers, DC to AC converters, along with voltage regulators.



More control panels for the Autovon System. Shows you how the technology was back then, the cabinets in the foreground housed the tape drives for the computer, notice the teletype machine. You can see a bit of the monitor for the Data General Eclipse computer that was used



[Click Here for a Location Map](#)

Note: This site is still in MOD hands and is Private.